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ABSTRACT

The seminar brought together a group of professionals or professionally related educators to discuss the National Commission on Excellence in Education report, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Reform," and its meaning to Alaska, a land of many contrasts not only in climate and vegetation but also in people and attitudes. The participants divided into five discussion groups to review the recommendations in "A Nation at Risk," to analyze the report's implications and to present a set of recommendations relevant to Alaska. Forty-two recommendations resulted; the groups and the first recommendation made by each, are as follows: the content group urged local school districts to use "Nation at Risk" as an impetus for examining their own programs based on Alaska's needs; the standards and expectations group advised educators to use the classroom, community, and home to raise student academic performance; the time group perceived the need to improve time management in the current school day, rather than lengthening the school day or year; the teaching group recognized the importance of liberal arts training for prospective teachers and urged teacher training centers to develop programs to accommodate need; and the leadership and fiscal support group advocated establishment of early childhood education programs, with set standards and certification requirements, and with state funding. All recommendations, as well as the presentations, a list of participants, and the editor's concluding statement are included. (BRR)

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A REPORT OF A SEMINAR ON

A NATION AT RISK: THE IMPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Held at the University of Alaska, Bill Ray Center
July 15, 1983

Sponsored by: The University of Alaska-Juneau
11120 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska 99801

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Edited by

William G. Demmert, Jr., Ed.D.

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Foreword

A seminar held on July 15, 1983, at the University of Alaska, Juneau, Alaska, brought together a group of professionals or professionally related educators to discuss the report released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, and its meaning to Alaska. The group met in a general session for a review of the purpose of the seminar. The participants then divided into five discussion groups, one for each recommendation of the Nation at Risk report, with the charge of reviewing each recommendation in depth. Each group had a designated discussion leader whose responsibility it was to provide opportunity to analyze the report, discuss its implications to the Alaska setting, and then to develop a report of the discussion and present a set of recommendations.

The seminar resulted from a discussion between several key educators in the state of Alaska about the importance of responding to the report released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The Chancellor from the University of Alaska-Juneau and the Director for the Center for Teacher Education agreed that it was both timely and proper for the University to sponsor the seminar. With support from the Director of University Relations and Conferences, Sharon Gaiptman, a list of invited participants was developed. The participants were selected because of their positions in State government, their roles in the education community, or their responsibilities in the world of work.

After clearly establishing the importance of the Nation at Risk report, the participants developed their discussions and recommendations. Then the group leaders presented summaries of their specific recommendations; the list of these appears under Part III, Seminar Report, Section A, Presentation; and B, Summary of Recommendations.

This document includes a welcome by the Chancellor, a charge for excellence in education by the Commissioner of Education, an overview of the Commission report by the Director of the Center for Teacher Education, the reports by the discussion leaders, and a concluding statement by the editor.

I wish to thank the individuals whose contributions to and participation in the seminar provided insights and perspectives on education in Alaska. Hopefully, these will help educators look to improve opportunities and quality in Alaska's educational system. A special thanks to Dr. Art Petersen, University of Alaska-Juneau, who took the time to read the report and make editorial suggestions to improve it.

William G. Demmert, Jr., Ed.D.

I

Overview of Education in Alaska

Dr. William G. Demmert, Jr.

Director, Center for Teacher Education

University of Alaska-Juneau

Alaska, with one-half million square miles,[1] is a land of many contrasts. The most obvious differences are in the climate and vegetation. However, the people and their attitudes about the state, the land, and its resources also contrast one another.

The interior of Alaska, with its perma-frost, minus fifty degree weather in the winter, and one hundred degree temperatures in the summer, is a foreign land to the Southeastern Alaskan. In Southeast the land is warmed by the Japanese Current which brings warm water and temperatures to what would otherwise be a cold coastline. This current causes the warm, damp winters and warm wet summers Southeastern Alaska is famous for. The northern areas of Alaska may or may not have trees. Southeast has lush forests and dense underbrush.

The indigenous populations (generally referred to as Natives) number about 72,000, some 16% of the total population.[2] They dominate

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1. The Alaska Almanac, 1982 edition, Alaska N.W. Publishing Company, Anchorage, Alaska, 1982, p. 90.
2. Ibid, p. 113

the rural areas of the state. Fishing, hunting, and other food-gathering activities are still an important part of their daily activity. They earn wages during the summer by participating in the fishing season along the coast or migrating to the cities for the working season. Businessmen, skilled tradesmen, or professionals have generally settled in the city where they can utilize their training. The majority population is a composite of representatives from the "lower forty-eight" (the original forty-eight states). Many have come to take advantage of the void in Alaskan industry and government for highly skilled technicians; others have come to escape the cities.

The schools in Alaska reflect contemporary attitudes toward the land, its resources, and the prejudices of its people. There are three kinds of schools in the state serving the elementary and secondary student populations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs operated 20 schools in Alaska through 1983, one of which was a boarding school. Private and denominational schools report a total of 83 schools, and the state reports a total of 50 school districts or attendance areas. The public school enrollment for the 1982-83 school years showed an average daily membership of 92,874 students.[3]

The number of classroom teachers during the 1982-83 school year, including classroom teachers, counselors, intinerant teachers, and librarians, totaled 7,572 professional staff. The pupil-teacher ratio is reported at 14.25 students per professional staff member. The average

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3. Facts & Figures About Education in Alaska, Alaska Department of Education, 1983, pp. 10-11.

salary of the professional staff in Alaska public schools is $34,510. The dollars spent in 1983 from local, state and federal funds amounted to $564,461,331. This amount breaks down into a per pupil cost of $5,269 in city and borough schools and $11,021 in rural schools.[4]

Generally speaking, the performance of students in Alaska compares well to that of students outside the state. The statewide average in Scholastic Achievement Scores (SAT) for the years 1975-1982 were from 7 to 30 points higher in mathematics and verbal test scores.[5] There may be exceptions to these averages among certain groups of students.

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4. Ibid., pp. 9-14.
5. Ibid., p. 15.

II

Opening Presentations

Dr. Michael Paradise

Chancellor, University of Alaska-Juneau

In the first pages of A Nation at Risk, the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a comparison of the efficiency and effectiveness of the U.S. industry and commerce is made with regard to those of other industrial nations. The point made was that the loss of our country's pre-eminence in those two areas signifies the redistribution of trained capabilities. In other words, skilled intelligence actually has declined in our country while it is progressing and flourishing in other parts of the world. This observation leads to the conclusion that the quality of education has lost ground when compared to other industrial nations.

The concern for American education is, of course, shared by all of us. We, who have made it our business to monitor education, are especially concerned about the apparent and not-so-apparent trends in our schools and colleges. Personally, I am most concerned about the state of education in Alaska.

Because of its youthfulness, Alaska lacks the infrastructure which is already in place in other states. The financial burden for developing that infrastructure is enormous. This condition, coupled with the forecasts for dwindling state revenues, creates an unparalleled pressure on the state treasury. That pressure over the next several years will result in fewer services and reduced development of our state. This diminution, of course, also could mean significant cutbacks in available state monies for education.

Some economies could undoubtedly be achieved in our public schools and the University. But there is an overriding point: Education in Alaska is only in its infancy. If it is to grow, it must be financially nourished. This condition is especially true for higher education.

The fact is that education in Alaska needs a healthy infusion of state monies if we are to achieve quality and if we are to meet the needs of our state.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education links the industrial and commercial wealth of our nation to that of the quality of our schools and colleges. This link is also true for Alaska. If our state is ever to break the dependence on only raw natural resources, if it is to get out of the boom-and-bust economic cycle which is characteristic in the state's short history, the state must develop an educational system that will cater to the uniqueness of our state.

It is up to us, you and me, to convince our state officials and legislators that even in the case of declining state revenues, the financial support of education must increase. As is the case of our

nation, Alaska cannot afford, in the long run, to have a poor or mediocre educational system.

We are glad you are here, and we hope you have an excellent conference.

The Charge for Discussing A Nation at Risk

Mr. Harold Raynolds, Jr.

Commissioner of Education, State of Alaska

The Nation at Risk document, in one way or another, provides us the basis for the kind of discussion which may be extremely useful in Alaska. It certainly is already proving to be useful in the continental United States, and hearing the people here introduce themselves this morning clearly indicates we have the right participants present from this section of Alaska. We have people from the legislature, the Governor's Office, we have people from Native communities and Native organizations. We obviously have people from the Department of Education, the local school district, and the University. We have an ideal basis for a partnership, and so I think that we can be thankful that the Nation at Risk has come out.

There has been some debate with regard to what the report is all about as a political document. It is about the importance of education in a free society. It is long overdue in coming from the national level. So welcome it, embrace it. As far as I'm concerned, there are many things that worry me about it, not the least of which is that it is posed in a series of metaphors which are more related to military activities than they are to educational activities. Maybe that's the kind of conditions that we got into with Sputnik where everybody knew we ought to have dollar increases for science and mathematics, but it took somebody's satellite to produce the reason or the cause to proceed to act.

As for the charge, we could come out of here today having had a useful time getting to know some people we might not have known. We could come out with a sense of the possibilities or the potentials, and we could even come out with some working agreements or the basis for some working agreements between our various organizations. I hope we make some progress towards the latter, because we need that partnership.

I would like to spend just a couple of minutes with you in attempting to say some of the things that I have observed so far. I will use a series of quick vignettes to indicate the scope of the problems that I see in Alaska, which are not so terribly different from other places, except in Alaska the prospect or possibility for isolation is so very much greater than it is in most states because of the size and the sparsity of the population. Here are some that I have seen already.

I saw two boys in a lumber camp on Prince of Wales Island, bending over a computer at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, boys about 9 years old. Our city or urban youth in Alaska will not be as advanced in their computer capacity in most cases as our rural and village children because there is such widespread use of computers in so many of the village schools. The excitement of those two boys was high. There was no teacher present. They had simply asked to use one little corner of one very small room, in what is a school on Prince of Wales Island in a lumber camp.

The second vignette is the report of the singing of the school song in the airplane as it circled Sitka, taking young people home for

the last time from Mt. Edgecumbe School back to Anchorage. Apparently the pilot was persuaded to take an extra swing around Sitka, so that students could take a last look at Mt. Edgecumbe and Sitka, the place where they had gone to school.

Education is all about options, and in Alaska educational options are very important. It may be the other side of the Tobeluk or the Molly Hootch decree: how do we provide choices for all?

Twenty Alaskan teachers participating in the Bay Area Writing Project a couple of weeks ago wrote what is called a fast write in the form of letters addressed to me. They stated a series of imperatives for education reform. They had very specific suggestions about what to do. But the thread that ran so true through each of those letters was the enthusiasm each of those teachers felt for the Bay Area Writing Project and the almost wide-eyed disbelief that occurred for those teachers when they went back to their schools. This was their second year in it, and they had the opportunity to use some of the Bay Area writing techniques in their schools. The amazement came because of the extraordinary development of the writing skills of the young people they taught.

I met a teacher, the only teacher in a high school on Prince of Wales Island at one of the lumber camps, a man from Oregon, modestly successful as a track star, who was chosen to teach on that Island. Every single moment that he is not actually teaching he is studying some subject which he can teach to the students who are there. He is the only school teacher in the school. He has become as nearly the complete educator as I believe is possible.

There was the parent filled with pleasure, right here in Juneau, graduating from the Adult Program with a GED at the same time that his son graduated from high school. Or the woman I met in Ketchikan who finished school only a year or two ahead of her children.

There are five or six curriculum consultants right across the street now, who are drawn together by a mutual concern for a framework useful to local school districts to develop better elementary curriculum with higher standards and expectations built in all along the way.

Mike Paradise already suggested the increasing pressure for resources. If we learn how to work together better, the same amount of money may produce as good or even better results. That's the underlying challenge or charge for the day. Organizing and delivering scarce resources is really what we are talking about.

A Master's Degree, computer in the classroom program [M.Ed. Educational Technology], has been developed by the University of Alaska-Juneau in conjunction with the local school district and supported by some technical assistance from the Department of Education. It is a good example, of a three-way partnership to utilize resources better.

The second major mission is encouraging and stimulating rigorous effort and high expectations. I think of the scholarship programs in some communities. I notice the one in Sitka; the local support for scholarship education is considerable.

A third mission is one of developing a climate of support, interest, and concern for education. In spite of all of the talk of merit pay for teachers, there is probably nothing that would be more important

than improving the school climate. There is a statement by a teacher which I think will sum up what I mean by the climate: "Fortunately for my students I have found a school district where teachers are considered valuable professionals and where professional development is taken seriously." Even more important than the call for merit pay is the necessity to set a tone or create a climate in each community, in each school, in the legislature, in the Governor's Office, which is supportive of education, of teaching and learning.

Then there are three missions: organizing and delivering scarce resources, encouraging and stimulating rigorous effort, and developing a climate of support, interest, and concern.

There are four reasons for public schools. The first of those four is citizenship; that's why we passed compulsory education laws in the United States more than a hundred years ago. Citizenship.

The second reason is for jobs--purposeful work and self-sufficiency--so that each individual will have the opportunity to develop skills and abilities which will assure that he or she does not become a public charge.

Socialization is the third reason for children attending schools--getting to know how to work and live with other people.

Finally, schools help children to pursue happiness by providing them with an informed, enlightened understanding about what the human experience is and what it could be.

We have important work to do today.

A Nation At Risk:
The Imperative for Educational Reform

Dr. William G. Demmert, Jr.

Director, Center for Teacher Education

University of Alaska-Juneau

On August 26, 1981, the Honorable Terrence H. Bell, Secretary of Education, U.S. Department of Education, created the National Commission on Excellence in Education and directed it to present a report on the quality of education in the United States. On April 26, 1983, the Commission presented its report to the Secretary, calling it "An Open Letter to the American People"--A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.

All or most of you have had the chance to read that report, or you have heard about it from others, through the newspaper, television, or radio. According to a recent publication of the American School Administrators, the report has captured the attention of the nation. The Commission on Excellence has been given a year's lease on life in order to continue activity that will enhance the movement to improve schools. One of those activities is to encourage meetings of this type and, in some cases, actually have Commission members participate. Ann Campbell, a member of the Commission and a personal friend of Chancellor Paradise, was invited but, unfortunately, could not attend. However, this seminar provides a splendid opportunity for us to explore the

recommendations of the report and relate them to our personal experiences. We should arrive at suggestions that each of us might consider as we independently work toward improving the quality of education at the various institutions we represent. In addition, the Chancellor will send Ann Campbell a transcript of this seminar for her to share with other members of the Commission.

There are five recommendations. They are based on these assumptions that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured, that a solid high school education is within the reach of virtually all, and that life-long learning will equip people with the skills required for new careers and citizenship.

The five recommendations are:

A. Content. That state and local high school graduation requirements be strengthened and that, at a minimum, all students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the five New Basics by taking the following curriculum during their four years of high school: 1) four years of English, 2) three years of mathematics, 3) three years of science, 4) three years of social studies, and 5) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, two years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended.

B. Standards and Expectations. That schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct, and that four-year colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission. These measures will help students do their best educationally

with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment.

C. Time. That significantly more time be devoted to learning the New Basics. This will require more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened school year.

D. Teaching. This recommendation consists of seven parts. Each is intended to improve the preparation of teachers or make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession. Each of the seven stands on its own and should not be considered solely as an implementing recommendation. The recommendations deal with requiring high educational standards for prospective teachers, adequate teachers' salaries, longer contracts, career ladders, and utilization of experts outside the teaching profession.

E. The fifth is Leadership and Fiscal Support. Citizens across the nation should hold educators responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve these reforms, and citizens should provide the fiscal support and stability required to bring about the reforms proposed. You all know that leaders across the state are concerned with the state's current foundation program, and some desire a new system.

President Reagan is focusing his attention on merit pay. The National Education Association (NEA), as I understand it, is interested in focusing on ways to improve education through increased financing, better teacher preparation, tougher certification standards, adequate teacher evaluation, and upgraded salaries. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is debating the Commission recommendations and has not

yet arrived at a decision on what it will support. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has developed a list of activities that interested groups or individuals could follow to begin a dialogue on the recommendations and stimulate interest/action on them. The New York Times, in June 1983, published an article that discussed "The Vicious Circle of Educational Mediocrity." The author points out that if Aristotle is right and the fate of the nation depends upon the education of its youth, then the United States is in trouble. "Teacher discontent is high. Good college students avoid the profession, and many of the better people already in teaching are leaving it. Strikes are frequent, and school administrators regard teachers as adversaries rather than as valued professional colleagues."

The report of the Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy, through a private grant from the Twentieth Century Fund, just recently released, points out that the nation's public schools are in trouble. "By almost every measure--the commitment and competence of teachers, student test scores, truancy and dropout rates, crimes of violence--the performance of our schools falls far short of expectations." The Task Force reports that there is a clear national interest in helping schools improve their performance and that the federal government must play a major role in a national effort to improve the schools.

The findings of the various reports, the opinions expressed in various articles, and the recommendations for correcting some of the ills are not inconsistent with each other. There is some disagreement

on how some of those recommendations should be carried out, and there may be recommendations that differ slightly—merit pay for master teachers versus an increase for teachers across the board (to attract better teachers) is an example—the point being that something must be done and that educators, representatives of the business world, state and federal legislators, parents, and others must begin pulling ideas and resources together to address their problems in their areas immediately.

I am not sure what all this means to Alaska, its schools, and its people—especially students. The problems in Alaska may differ somewhat. Problems of student achievement may not be as great, quality of the state's teachers may not be in question, adequate public financing for education may not be an issue, the quality of teacher training programs at the universities may not be important, the curriculum of the state's schools may be adequate. Then again, some of the problems mentioned in the various reports may apply to Alaska as well. I hope members of this seminar can begin a dialogue about those problems and develop recommendations or options on how to deal with the problems this group feels are important to Alaska. There is some interest about the Nation at Risk report and whether some of the problems and recommendations are relevant to Alaska, or most of you would not be here.

In any case, we will find out. This seminar has been organized around a general session, five discussion groups to correspond to the five recommendations in the report, with the opportunity to discuss report findings and recommendations. There is also time allocated to

develop recommendations, if appropriate, and to present those recommendations to the larger group at the end of the day.

The discussion leaders for each group are listed as follows: Group A is chaired by Dr. Bruce Johnson, Group B by Dr. Beverly Beeton, Group C by Dr. Mike Adams, Group D by Dr. William Demmert, and Group E by Commissioner Raynolds.

I pointed out earlier that each group leader is expected to set the stage for a discussion about problems in Alaska as those problems relate to the recommendation of the report and the particular section assigned to that group. I would then expect the discussions to focus on ways we in Alaska could address those problems by developing alternative strategies and options. After lunch the groups could then focus on those recommendations that seem reasonable and develop a set of written recomendations that would be summarized by each group leader when we reconvene.

III

Seminar Reports

A. Presentations

Report From Discussion Group A

Dr. Bruce Johnson
Assistant Superintendent
City & Borough of Juneau School District

Our study group focused on the first of five major recommendations outlined by the Commission. Recommendation A: Content reads as follows:

> We recommend that State and local high school graduation requirements be strengthened and that, at a minimum, all students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the Five New Basics by taking the followng curriculum during their four years of high school: (a) 4 years of English; (b) 3 years of mathematics; (c) 3 years of science; (d) 3 years of social studies; and (e) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, 2 years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended.

The study group shared a general acceptance that there was nothing wrong with the federal government looking at the basic curriculum and

attempting to make suggestions. While no member of the study group expressed opposition to Recommendation A of the report, caution was recommended that school districts not interpret the report as if it were written for every school district in the state of Alaska, or every school district throughout the nation. It is critical that the report be examined in relationship to what is occurring in a specific district. To highlight this fact, a group member commented that implementing the precise content standards established in the report could actually lessen a school district's effort by lowering standards. Obviously, there are school districts throughout the nation that will use this report, or be forced to use this report, and discover critical deficiencies.

Our discussion group suggested that local school districts use the report as an impetus for examining their educational program, specifically as it relates to content/course requirements. This educational program examination should be done in a manner which promotes local ownership. Part of our deliberation centered on conducting needs assessments to determine what school districts are actually doing, that is, surveying young people who have graduated from high school to analyze the revelance of course requirements. Such research can assist school districts in making judgments on course content. Another practical approach could be the use of a broadly based study committee. Again, school districts must remember that all publics should help examine the issue and help determine what is occurring and chart a course which can bring about positive outcomes and growth.

The first major issue discussed was the State Board of Education and its role in the state of Alaska. Those group members who have been in Alaska for some time suggested that the State Board of Education has played a facilitating role in the education of Alaskan youth. It could be concluded, given the Commission's report, that the federal government is beginning to increase its involvement by prescribing rather than simply facilitating through establishment of minimum course requirements for graduation. However, our group felt that the State Board of Education needs to consider its desired involvement and deal with it as a policy issue. Our group is not necessarily suggesting that the State Board should prescribe what should happen in every school because of the local uniquenesses given a school district, such as in Anchorage or Fairbanks in relationship to those located in village areas where there are two or three teachers.

The second area of concentration for our group was to examine the course requirements necessary at the high school level in anticipation of what educators predict the future needs of students to be. It is probably very easy to establish a set of learning objectives for a student without careful projections of future skill requirements. Whatever futuristic notions educators can conceive and whatever resources educators can bring to bear to project what young people are going to require to be successful in the adult world should be carefully undertaken. It seemed to our group that true education is more than a set of social studies objectives or science objectives or mathematics objectives. There is much more that goes into the study of any discipline, and this

content oftentimes cannot be written. It is our assumption that there are unwritten objectives and behaviors which are to be learned and that these will probably prove as valuable or more valuable than measurable skills. An example of this knowledge base would be the ability to solve problems, such as to identify problems and deal effectively with them. Such skills, which come under the categories like creative and critical thinking, are not developed through any specific course in high school; they are intertwined with many of the basic content disciplines. These skills are all related to process and are not easily defined in course content. One member of the group observed that in some of the countries to which U.S. students are compared in the Commission's study, the educational leadership places considerable emphasis on recall information. Naturally, those students are apt to perform better on the measures which are typically used in determining one's success in acquiring knowledge. Our study group concluded there is more to education than just information recall. Such education is only going to be usable for a relatively short period of time, and learners need to continue to upgrade and have the skills necessary to continue acquisition of knowledge.

This discussion caused our group to address an area that was not specifically part of our charge—teaching methodology. It was very difficult for our group to examine content without looking at methodology. The Nation At Risk report is critical of the amount of time that is spent in teacher training programs on methodology which detracts from the acquisition of content knowledge. The group struggled with

this concept and the importance of conveying to our young people something more than just a rote set of information, which in all likelihood will be quickly lost.

The third area which we explored was the notion of continually revising and updating course content and expectations for course content to assure relevance. This updating is not something school districts are going to accomplish in a five-year period; rather, it is an ongoing process. If our curriculum is outdated today, it will be just as outdated three or four years from now unless educators continue to examine curriculum and make appropriate changes. The group members were not necessarily suggesting the need to upgrade graduation requirements but rather the need to continually examine content with the idea of maintaining relevance, particularly with an eye towards what future skills adulthood is likely to require of distinct groups of students.

The fourth major area of discussion was the vital role that educators play in structuring a plan of action for a community in establishing an appropriate education program. Too often, and such could be the case with a report of this nature, the federal government has issued an edict without understanding local needs. It would be very easy for a local board of education to adopt stiffer graduation requirements without a thorough examination of the rationale for such actions. In the final analysis, the content of the curriculum is the most important consideration, not that students attended four courses in mathematics or four courses in English. It is important that graduates leave high school with usable skills in order to communicate effectively, compute effectively, etc.

The final concern which was addressed involved how to keep our teachers, particularly those who have been in the field for some time, up to date with course content. Many of the group members associated directly with Juneau are attracted to the idea of a teacher center which will help them accomplish professional development so that teachers are not required on their own time to assume the total responsibility of continually updating their skills. A school system needs to provide a portion of the time required for such development within the normal working day in a way that is relevant and in a manner that assures some carryover. This concept is not one of attending a night course or going back into the school environment with no support group, and/or assisting a teacher in implementing newly acquired skills and ideas. This support concept needs to be built into the ongoing professional life of each teacher if a school district's effort is truly going to make a difference and students will ultimately benefit.

Summary of Basic Issues Addressed by the Study Group

1. The Alaska State Board of Education should deal with the question of Federal intervention in Alaska State and local educational governance as a policy issue.

2. Local boards of education should examine graduation requirements in light of the predicted skills necessary for a student's future success.

3. Course content and expectations should be continually examined and updated to assure relevance.

4. Educators should welcome the opportunity to examine course content and requirements by playing a leadership role in the study process.

5. Local communities should explore productive ways in which to assure that the educational staff is current both in subject content as well as methodology.

Report From Discussion Group B

Dr. Beverly Beeton

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

University of Alaska-Juneau

My discussion group was asked to address Recommendation B: Standards and Expectations. At first we had a negative reaction to the report in that as educators we felt that the report was an indictment of what we have been doing and the values we represent. After some discussion, however, we decided that the report does contain some things that we all identify with, contains things that we all believe in, and certain ideas we would like to adopt. We have prepared some recommendations for you. Before I get into our recommendations, let me read the recommendation of the Commission so that you understand the context in which we conducted our discussion. Recommendation B: Standards and Expectations:

> We recommend that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct, and that 4-year colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission. This will help students to do their best educationally with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment.

After extensive discussion we concluded that expectation is a very powerful item in a learning environment. The expectations of the teacher, the parents, the family, the community, the culture are very important in determining the level of performance to which students aspire. Our recommendation is that we do everything we can in the classroom, in the community, and in our homes to raise expectations to a higher level of performance in academic pursuits from students. We are not too sure about how you go about that. It is an attitudinal question, but we believe as educators we can help influence our individualized circles, and certainly our community here in Juneau.

With regard to academic performance, we concur that a more rigorous level of performance should be sought in all our institutions of learning, public and private, kindergarten through university. There was a consensus in the group that the emphasis should be on basic literacy skills. We want to be sure that all citizens enjoy the ability to communicate. We are particularly concerned with written skills, but we are keenly aware of all the other communication skills that are necessary in our society. Our recommendation with regard to that aspect is that we, as educators, require more written work of students, more routine, constant, graded essay kinds of requirements. We recommend the structuring of the curriculum to reduce the use of workbooks and multiple choice tests. In other words, we recommend that we find ways for active knowledge to be expressed in written form, perhaps orally. We also make the point that students should learn how to think, think critically, and prepare for lifelong learning. Much of

the dialogue in this report, and much of the dialogue we engage in, often is addressed to preparation for college. The consensus of our group is that we need to prepare people for a lifelong learning experience, whether they are going to pursue college or not.

We talked about methods and grading. The discussion group felt that grades should reflect levels of achievement and that effort in a course should not result in a high grade. We talked about the grade inflation that is taking place nationwide and felt strongly that grades should be indicators of academic achievement and evidence of student readiness to go on to the next level of performance. We recommend that pass/fail should seldom be used as a grading method. We recommend staying with the standard A, B, C and using the grading method vigorously. Another method we talked about for providing measurable standards and increasing the standards and expectations was to use tests to measure accomplishments. There we did have some caution and we did have some concern about standardized tests. We were concerned that these in some cases may discriminate against the culturally different. and we need to be on guard against that, but the group was committed to using testing to determine levels of accomplishment.

We talked about textbooks and technology as an education methodology. We felt that we need to Alaskanize much of the material we use in our schools so that it will reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Native populations, and we need to adapt the materials we use to the environment in the small villages and towns where many people are obtaining their educational experience. As Alaskan educators we need

to explore every possible use of modern technology to deliver the educational opportunities to the state.

We had a lively discussion about the third and major point in Section B, which relates to admission requirements to higher institutions of learning. I can tell you there is certainly not a consensus of opinion there. Most of the opinions were held very strongly; most people were not ambivalent about this issue. There was agreement that there should be examinations to determine skill levels at the time of admission. When we are talking about public institutions, such as the university here in Juneau, we did have difficulty in saying people should be denied admission on the basis of their skill level. We are an open access learning institution; we believe in giving people an opportunity. A compromise point we came to was that we should have testing to assess skills to provide remediation when necessary. We should then have good advising to complete degrees. There was some talk about denying admission to undergraduate programs on the basis of tests. We could not come to a consensus on that. We did have some interest in establishing examinations for exit level skills, particularly in the teaching profession.

Report on Discussion Group C

Dr. Michael Adams

Superintendent

City & Borough of Juneau School District

Our committee began its deliberations by agreeing that the process was going to be more important than the product and recognizing that there would be future opportunities for broader based participation of representatives from our community, school district, and other institutions affiliated with public education to deal with these reform issues. Our committee was charged with studying and reacting to the Commission's Recommendation C on the subject of time. The Commission's statement reads:

> We recommend that significantly more time be devoted to learning the New Basics. This will require a more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened school year.

Following the major recommendation, the report included eight implementing recommendations. Our committee estabished as its goal to validate the major concepts being addressed in the major implementing recommendations and to translate from those concepts recommendations that we feel are pertinent to public education in Alaska and in Juneau. Earlier, Commissioner Raynolds admonished us not to consider the

political context in which the report was developed. Our committee found this difficult to accept in that the implications for reform suggested by some of the recommendations in the report contradict the direction suggested by the research base of Effective Schools. Consequently, in our committee's report you will hear and subsequently read recommendations that are drawn more from the research base of Effective Schools than from the commonly nationally based reports such as A Nation at Risk or the Hunt Report.

For example, one of the solutions recommended in the Nation at Risk report states that we should consider expanding our school day to seven hours and the school year from 200 to 220 days. This solution is based upon a common perception that public education in America does not devote sufficient time during the school day nor during the school year to instruction as compared to other countries. It is alleged that public education in the United States is inferior as a direct result of the comparatively less time students spend in the instructional process. Our group addressed the length of the school day or the school year and that we follow the direction suggested by the research base on Effective Schools: that we seek to improve the management of time we currently have available to support instruction as well as the breadth of subject matter dealt with in our public school curriculum.

The first issue the committee dealt with was suggested in the recommendation that school districts and state legislatures should strongly consider seven hour school days as well as a 200 to 220 day school year. We began by recognizing that in Alaska the State Statute

requires a minimal school year of 180 days with a provision that ten of those days may be applied at local district's discretion to days of in-service. After deliberation the committee reaffirmed its position that initial efforts of reform in this area should be placed on maximizing the utilization of time already allocated by statute. Specifically, the committee recommends that students in the schools of Alaska attend for a minimum of 180 days each year, and that staff development be considered through some other mode.

The Committee took the position that staff development programs as currently constituted and delivered do not achieve the desired objectives and have little impact upon changing the behavior or attitudes of the classroom teacher and thereby have minimal impact upon improving instructional processes. In essence, the committee raised serious questions about the value of current staff development delivery systems and suggested that those days currently allowable for staff in-service in statute be obviated and the time incorporated into the minimum number of instructional days required by the State.

Further, the committee recommends that any consideration of lengthening the school day be done in concert with improving the quality of the interaction between the teacher and the student (the teaching-learning act), as well as the quantity of time. A provision should be made for providing in-service as an integral and ongoing part of the system and designed to improve instruction. An additional suggestion in this area is that the State should consider a provision for summer school procedures which would provide extended learning activities for all students.

The committee's discussion then centered upon implementing the recommendation that "students in high schools should be assigned more homework than is now the case." The committee viewed homework as an opportunity for directed extended learning and should emphasize and focus upon the reinforcement or extension of subject matter being addressed in the regular classroom. With this definition local school districts should establish policies and regulations that implement these principles.

The second suggestion in this area made by the committee is that the policies regarding extended learning should be established locally at a level which would insure equal opportunity for all students. The committee pointed out that all students do not have the same climate and support in the home setting to complete extended learning activities, a condition which represents de facto or unequal opportunity for all students. It was the committee's contention that the school, if it is going to assist in alleviating this inequity, should really be organized and viewed as a learning center with students encouraged apart from the regular school day to take advantage of opportunities for an adequate learning environment to support extended learning activities. The group addressed another facet of this issue recommending that those policies developed by local school districts and established to provide directed learning activities should be approached as providing these opportunities as integral parts of the total educational program and not as an addendum to what is offered during the regular day. Further, the group suggests that the State should cooperate with

the districts in focusing upon developing the technological support for extended learning. Concomitant with this concept of the school becoming a learning center is providing continuous open access to the curriculum through technological support.

The committee then dealt with the following recommendation that

> the burden on teachers for maintaining discipline should be reduced through the development of firm and fair codes of student conduct that are enforced consistently and by considering alternative classroom programs and schools to meet the needs of continually disruptive students.

The committee seriously questioned whether this recommendation represented a high priority in the schools of Juneau or Alaska. However, the committee recognized the need for attending to the problem of student behavior but recommends that the development of any programs in this area should be approached from the perspective of prevention. The committee recommends that if the problem of disruptive student behavior in the classroom is to be resolved, then solutions should be formulated around preventive concepts which insure success for all students in the public school setting. This begins with the view that students are winners and achievers and is followed with the organization and approaches that reinforce this ideology. The committee points out that the research clearly shows that successful students in the home setting and at school feel better about themselves and make better decisions.

Summary of Committee Recommendations

1. That Alaska public school students attend a minimum of 180 instructional days.

2. That staff development be organized and delivered as an integral part of the system, focused upon improving instruction and providing follow-up and reinforcement in the classroom setting.

3. That extended learning activities (homework) be made available as an integral part of the regular program in schools and delivered in such a way that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit.

4. That State support be provided for summer school programs in order to provide extended learning activities for all students.

5. That schools be organized as learning centers which, through the support of new and emerging technology, provide students with continuous and open access to learning activities.

6. That disruptive behavior in the classroom be approached through prevention, which begins with the ideology that all children are potentially high achievers and that systems of delivery are consistent with this ideology.

Report From Discussion Group D

Dr. William G. Demmert, Jr.

Director, Center for Teacher Education

University of Alaska-Juneau

I think two statements from the group are worth identifying. First, there was a general feeling that Alaskans should be surveyed to see if the report's findings are relevant, and second, that a dialogue be initiated concerning the problems that are in fact important to Alaska. We discussed many other general areas, but I won't get into those. At some point we might include them in a report. Our presentation will be in two parts. I'll give the first part, and Alan Blume will give the second part.

Recommendation D has seven parts.

> Each is intended to improve the preparation of teachers or to make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession. Each of the seven stands on its own and should not be considered solely as an implementing recommendation.

I will attempt to address briefly each of those parts and then discuss the kinds of things we agreed upon, either in terms of a recommendation, a statement of sorts, or a question.

The first dealt with teacher preparation and having high educational standards, looking for students that have an aptitude for teaching and competence in the academic discipline, and recommending that col-

leges and universities be evaluated in some way on the success of their teachers. We agreed that this recommendation is worth supporting. The first step in addressing it was, we felt, to define what we meant by high educational standards. Identifying criteria for acceptable standards for teaching aptitude still needs to be done. We felt that a strong liberal arts curriculum for prospective teachers is an important base upon which to build areas of specialization. The report did not deal with that, but we felt that it was important to look at. We believe both are necessary for the effective Alaskan school teacher. We also thought university programs must develop rigorous standards that will help individuals who are not meeting acceptable standards or weed them out if they cannot, after being helped, achieve those standards. For example, practical experience for students in a classroom might be lengthened so that a student might be observed over a longer period of time, rather than nine weeks, maybe six months, maybe nine months.

The second recommendation dealt with salaries and evaluations. The National Committee felt salaries should be increased, so that they are competitive, and market sensitive. Moreover, they should be performance based, a requirement that demands some form of evaluation system, including peer review. Schools should develop a process for helping the poor teacher but also in weeding her or him out if necessary. Generally, the group felt that teacher salaries in Alaska are competitive and market sensitive. The evaluation system for teachers and administrators probably needs strengthening. An evaluation system needs input from a variety of sources: students, peers, supervisors, and

even, as one member pointed out, some sort of voting opportunity by the community, or at least some form of community involvement in an evaluation. The focal point might be classroom performance, but other performance factors might need to be considered.

The third general area dealt with an eleven-month contract, special programs for students, adequate levels of compensation and time for professional curriculum training, time set aside for teachers to work on curriculum, and an opportunity for professional development. We felt that we needed some hard data to see whether this recommendation is appropriate for Alaska. The seasonal nature of the Alaska economy might not lend itself to supporting an eleven-month contract. Curriculum and professional development can be built into the system in other ways, and I think that Dr. Adams talked about that to some degree. The university and school district need to work out times for in-service opportunities. We also thought that non-monetary kinds of incentives for teacher competence might be important. Earlier we addressed the issue of teacher salaries and whether or not they were adequate. Perhaps research grants and the opportunity for master teachers to conduct research would substitute for salary increases, maybe some release time from teaching responsibilities in order to allow some additional time for professional development. We do that at the university level, and it works. There was a general feeling about point three, special programs for students. In the area on the whole, Alaska is doing a fine job, but we need to expand or strengthen activities that are related to a core responsibility in the school.

That perceptive recommendation was very strongly expressed.

The last recommendation that we dealt with in this particular group was for career ladders for teachers and the need to distinguish among the beginning, intermediate, and master teachers. Again, there was a general feeling that the salary schedules of most districts recognize experience, recognize more training, and recognize the opportunity for advanced degrees for teachers. We talked about the possibility of beginning teachers starting earlier with university professor/master teacher guidance, and of providing opportunities for longer training periods in the school system. Another good idea is to provide opportunity for master teachers to go out and test and report on advanced levels of educational thought and application. We also had a question that we didn't have an answer for. That was, "Is there a need for teachers moving up the ladder, from beginning instructor, intermediate teacher, to master teacher, in terms of peer recognition or monetary reward?" I think that this report dealt with monetary reward for master teachers. In some cases, community and peer recognition would be as well received by the teachers.

Continuation of Group D

Mr. Alan Blume

Special Assistant to the Governor

"Substantial nonschool personnel resources should be employed to help solve the immediate problem shortage in mathematics and science."

The fundamental question asked was whether this was a valid assumption for the State of Alaska. We believe that there may be imbalances within the education system and in various regions of the state, but what needs to be evaluated is the type of math/science training we want to provide in the urban and rural areas.

The assumption of a shortage may not be accurate in Alaska, and our willingness to make such a resource commitment may result in an incomplete "quick-fix" approach where no problem exists.

If there is a need for math/science, we first need to make that determination. We would need to know what it is the State will provide the rural areas as opposed to the intermediate communities, as opposed to the larger urban centers. We believe that nonfinancial resources personnel exist in the state. There are enough engineers, scientists, technical people with the skills in science and mathematical fields to make that diversion of resource possible. It may also be because the market place for teachers is as competitive as it is, that entry on the part of those professionals from engineering into teaching is already an opportunity, so that we don't need to mobilize them as though they were a special cadre for a war resources board.

Consequently, we need to again determine the kind of math/science programs that we need and want in rural Alaska and to determine the kind of resources to be allocated. Clearly, what is needed is a consensus so that we can develop a plan to deal with that unique problem.

We may also need comparable plans in the area of humanities, social sciences, and foreign languages. But that requires a more detailed evaluation of what's happening in the state.

The last part of this question really hinges on where we would find the fiscal resources if we mobilize people to provide this service. As broadly spread as we are in the state, to try to provide a quality learning experience to the students in these particular areas could be terribly expensive. Expensive, that is, unless we can find nonmonetary incentives or altruistically-motivated individuals in the community who will take it upon themselves to provide this service, without passing it back into the school district or on to the state and federal governments.

Under item six, Incentives, our first reaction was, it's a very good idea to put these incentives in place. Perhaps the first things we need to acknowledge are the lessons learned from Sputnik in 1957 with the institution of the National Defense Student Loan program, by placing heavy emphasis on certain standards of training and providing special incentives. Again, we suggest eliminating any reference to loans and concentrate on grants--the special inducements to the truly academically gifted, the talented people who will be providing services. The Alaska State Student Loan Program, as an example, is not based on a

needs test nor is it necessarily keyed directly to academic standing. Thus, it may act as a disincentive for other means of funding a program of this particular nature.

We're really talking about "icing the cake" in the form of grants and special awards to the truly competent student to go into the field of specialized education. We think that it is proper to develop a supervisory role for master teachers dealing with their peers. That may not sit well with the teaching profession itself, but the consensus is that a flat structure, which necessarily leaves individuals isolated one from the other, argues in favor of a team teaching or team reinforcing structure. The master, intermediate, and beginning teacher network can create a cadre, a sense of purpose, and a mission that may be otherwise overlooked in the pursuit of improved teacher motivation.

Report From Discussion Group E

Mr. Harold Raynolds, Jr.

Commissioner of Education, State of Alaska

The President's Commission declared:

> We recommend that citizens across the nation hold educators responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve these reforms, and that citizens provide the fiscal support and stability required to bring about the reforms we propose.

We reviewed the recommendation and went to work. We identified seventeen ideas that might be used by citizens and their representatives in state localities. We started with one suggestion: establish early childhood education; it is important to set standards, set certification requirements, set technical assistance, and then to fund it.

Second, state-sponsored parent education is absolutely essential. Especially in the early years, not later on, when parents whose children have just graduated from high school say, "I never knew some of those things."

Third, equalizing funding for education is critical, particularly in a state like this. We must recognize and understand the incredible differences from local to local. This is a state that is disparate in its educational resources because its populations are either concentrated or widely scattered over a huge geographic area. Equity in funding will be a continuing responsibility, and it does not fall solely on the

legislature. We can't just walk away from it and say, "Here, legislature, you take care of it." It falls on the Department of Education essentially, first, then the governor, and then the legislative branch. As we've already seen, it fell on the judicial branch in the State of Alaska in the Molly Hootch decision, and that really was a matter of equalized educational opportunity, although we call it village high schools.

Fourth. Valuing education sets the climate in which the enterprise goes forward. Lifelong learning was suggested as being important. Continuing education, community education, common use of facilities--these kinds of things are part of valuing education. We support formation of an Alaska Commission on Excellence in Education to consider fundings and seek implementation.

We encourage greater cooperation, and we have some models: the University of Alaska-Juneau, the Juneau School District, and the Department of Education have jointly developed a program to train teachers in the use of computers in the classroom. We propose specific training for service in rural areas and village schools. And a different pattern of teacher teaching for those who intend to go into urban education. We need more of an individualized educational program for teachers and administrators-in-training in keeping with the general mandate of special education: programs of training which fit teachers for the real places they will teach.

School board members should be trained to provide the kind of leadership which they are expected to provide.

Maintaining and expanding the small schools conference was a specific suggestion. That is a conference that has apparently met with enormous success. It should be continued and utilized.

The support for adopt-a-school programs should be developed. Why not turn to some of the major corporations and other organizations in the state to adopt a school? Any one of the larger corporations could adopt a rural school and add new dimensions, not just financing.

Curriculum development, particularly stressing subjects like Alaska Native Study, needs attention. We urge proactive board-superintendent policies to assess what it is the community really wants. Our observation was that sometimes schools go right on doing some things that they think are the right things to do, but the community has long since stopped needing those things. Schools need to be attentive to what the community wants.

We propose clarifying the role of administrators. These people are in some doubt about what they are supposed to be doing. Principals and superintendents must play a crucial leadership role. They need better equipment, background, and understanding of what that leadership role is.

Finally, preparation for education must fit the needs of education. A very graphic example, presented in rather modest terms by one of our members, is the pipeline example. When it was clear that this state would have a major development called the pipeline, education, unfortunately somewhat characteristically, didn't move rapidly to prepare Alaskans for jobs on the pipeline. I think that's a simple, clear, classic

statement of what education ought to be doing. It suggests the future, and identifies the things that exist in the present, and those which we want to have happen in the future. For example, we can expect that our futures will still be based on the institution of a family; therefore, schools now preparing for the future should be making the family a center for learning. That's a kind of enlightened futurism which isn't always a part of futuristics. What did we say? Valuing education is important. Valuing education means setting a climate in which there is positive, affirmative support with the full understanding of how important a fine education is to the individual and the community.

We need a system of rewards for professionals in education. On the question of how do you reward professionals, we concluded that salary levels are high in the state and are not seen as such a problem as they may be in other states. That is the reason why that issue of teacher salaries is not a hot one.

The 65/35 issue is a big one for the State of Alaska. This is a handy way of saying that only 35% of the people in Alaska have any real connection through their children with the schools directly, unless the schools have developed a real community education program. As that percentage goes down, if we have not built a sense of community about education, we may be assured that as fewer people with less connection to the schools are asked to pay more money to fund the schools, they will turn these requests down. The schools haven't become central to the life of the community.

B. Summary of Recommendations

1. Group A: Recommendation A—Content
   a. That local school districts should use the Nation at Risk report as an impetus for examining their own educational programs, specifically as they relate to content/course requirements because the Nation at Risk report may not accurately reflect Alaskan schools.
   b. That local examination of school content/course offerings should be accomplished in a manner that promotes a sense of local ownership.
   c. That needs assessments should be conducted to help determine what school districts are doing, including surveying of young people who have graduated to analyze course requirement relevance.
   d. That schools need to examine course offerings to insure compatibility with needs of students when they become adults.
   e. That schools should continually revise and update course content and expectations to assure relevance.
   f. That school systems need to provide ample time and opportunity for educators to update their skills, and learn new ones where appropriate.
2. Group B: Recommendation B—Standards and Expectations
   a. That we as educators do everything we can in the classroom, in the community, and in our homes to raise levels of academic performance among our students.

b. That we as educators require more written work of students, more routine, constant, graded essay kinds of requirements.

c. That there should be an emphasis on teaching people to think, to think critically, to prepare for lifelong learning.

d. That grades should be indicators of academic achievement and evidence of student readiness to go on to the next level of performance.

e. That we need to Alaskanize much of the educational material used in the schools so that it will reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Native populations, and we need to adapt the materials we use to the environment in the small villages and towns.

f. That we need to explore every possibility of using modern technology to deliver educational opportunities to the state.

3. Group C: Recommendation C—Time

a. That we need to improve the management of time currently available in the school day rather than arbitrarily lengthening the school day or year beyond the 180 days now required.

b. That current staff development programs be incorporated into the number of instructional days required by the State without reducing student contact with teachers.

c. That any consideration of lengthening the school day be done with consideration to improving the quality of interaction between the teacher and the student (the teaching-learning act).

d. That the State should have provisions for summer school for extended learning opportunities designed to improve the instructional process.

e. That local school districts should address the issue of homework with an emphasis and focus upon the reinforcement or extension of subject matter being addressed in the regular classroom.

f. That schools recognize the different home environments students are exposed to as the issue of homework is addressed.

g. That schools should become learning centers where students, apart from the learning day, would have opportunity for an adequate learning environment to support extended learning activities.

h. That the State should work in cooperation with the districts to focus developing the technological support for extended learning.

i. That problems dealing with student discipline in schools should be addressed from the perspective of prevention and should be a local impetus.

4. Group D: Recommendation D—Teaching

a. That a strong liberal arts curriculum for prospective teachers is an important base upon which to build areas of specialization; teacher training centers should develop their program to accommodate their need.

b. That rigorous standards must be developed to differentiate between individuals that are not able to meet the demands of teaching.

c. That student teaching experiences should be extended to allow for a more complete analysis of a person's teaching skills and aptitudes, as well as for more intensive on-the-job-training opportunities.

d. That appropriate non-monetary kinds of incentives for teacher competence be offered, e.g., research grants, released time from teaching responsibilities, career ladders for teachers to distinguish between the beginning, intermediate, and master teacher.

e. That the appropriate kind of math/science programs for rural Alaska be determined, as well as the kind of resources to be allocated.

f. That since we may need comparable action plans in the areas of the humanities, social sciences, and foreign languages, a more detailed evaluation of what is happening throughout the state is needed.

g. That the focus should be on grants rather than loans as special inducements to the truly academically gifted, the talented people who will be providing the teaching services.

5. Group E: Recommendation E--Leadership and Fiscal Support

a. That early childhood programs should be established, set standards, set certification requirements, and provide state funding.

b. That parent education programs for students right out of high school in cooperation with early childhood programs be established.

c. That equity in State funding for schools must be worked out for village and urban schools alike.

d. That continuing education, community education, and common use of facilities are important for setting the proper attitudes toward education and should be a part of the State's education system.

e. That an Alaska Commission on Excellence in Education should be formed and functional.

f. That greater cooperation must be developed between the local school districts, the University system, and the Department of Education.

g. That teacher training programs need to focus on training village or urban teachers specifically. Patterns of training need to reflect the needs of the different settings in the state.

h. That more training opportunity for local school boards is needed.

i. That the annual small school conference should be expanded to include greater participation.

j. That the role of school administrators needs to be clarified, and that these administrators be assisted in carrying out their responsibilities by making excellent training programs available to them.

k. That patterns of education must fit the needs of education.

l. That a system of rewards for professionals in education must be established.

m. That more people in the state must have an opportunity to participate in the schools as part of a community education opportunity.

n. That a more developed positive attitude toward schools and education must be developed.

IV

Concluding Statement

The National Commission on Excellence in Education report, called A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, rekindled a national interest concerning the quality of America's schools. This interest has focused on improving the educational system and the importance of the public taking a more personal interest in improving the schools their children attend.

The report charges that ". . . the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people." The Commission points out that society and schools seem to have forgotten what school is for, and that educators have forgotten how to make schools succeed. Schools, the Commission points out, are routinely asked to provide solutions to personal, political, and social problems that the home and other institutions should or will not or cannot solve.

In the past America's resources, the competitive nature of her people, and the quality of her educational institutions helped her emerge as the leader of nations. In the international business community, the United States is losing ground to other nations. There is a redistribution of trained technicians in the world, and according to the Commission, if the United States is to keep and improve the slim

competitive edge it still enjoys, our educational system for young and old alike must improve. The Commission points out that

> The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life. A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom....

The findings of the report indicate that declines in educational performance are to a large degree the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the process of education is often conducted. There are four important areas of the educational process found to be lacking: content, expectation, time, and teaching.

The findings regarding content reflect that secondary school curricula have been diluted to the point that there does not appear to be a central purpose to schooling. With regard to expectations, notable deficiencies were identified in the level of knowledge, abilities, and skills that school and college graduates should possess. As educators we demand and receive less from our students. In the area of time, evidence demonstrates three disturbing facts: that American students

spend much less time on school work than students of other nations; that time spent in class and on homework is often ineffectively used; and schools are not doing their job in helping students develop study skills, or use time effectively. In the area of teaching, the Commission found that academically able students are not being attracted to teaching, that teacher training programs are in need of substantial improvement, that the professional working life of teachers on the whole is unacceptable, and that there is a serious shortage of teachers in key fields.

The implications of all of this information, including the recommendations provided in the summary portion of this paper, are that schools can improve if the recommendations are implemented, and that the achievement level of our nation's students will improve.

Will this in fact happen, or is this just another of many educational reform movements that will blossom for just a short time and then die out? Only our performance, and time will tell.

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